

15 August 1960

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: Warning Flag on Iran

1. We have for some time been concerned with the consequences for the Shah if public disturbances similar to those which preceded the coup in Turkey were to break out in Iran. One of the main causes of this concern is the possibility that some of the military and security force leaders, upon whom the burden of suppressing the agitation would fall, might seize the opportunity to attempt a coup of their own. Until now, however, there has been no clearcut issue which might serve to trigger the widespread discontent which exists among certain classes in Iran into violent action.

2. The elections which are now underway could provide such an issue. It is clear that the Shah has rigged them very heavily-handedly. Indeed, so many of his entourage have gotten into the rigging act, that the whole business would resemble a comic opera, if it were not for its potentially tragic undertones. There have been minor disturbances in some provincial areas where elections have already been held, and the possibility of larger scale disturbances in Tehran, where the balloting is to start 17 August, is real.

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3. It is impossible to estimate the chances of such outbursts, which will depend on the behavior of the regime. The political heat is acute in Tehran. Cancellation of elections in the capital could provoke an upsurge of public sentiment. So could the injury or arrest by the security forces of student or nationalist leaders. The security forces, if they chose to do so, could almost certainly control on behalf of the regime any outburst that might take place. Whether or not they would choose to do so is another thing that cannot be predicted. Our purpose at the moment is merely to point out that disturbances may occur and to emphasize that if they do, there is a chance that the present regime might not survive them and their repercussions.

FOR THE BOARD OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

ARLOT SMITH
Acting Chairman

Original & 1 - Addressee
1 - D/DCI
1 - DDI
1 - Memo for DCI file
1 - CES
1 - NE Staff